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NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON  
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SUBJECT: THREE POLICE OFFICERS KILLED BY SPLA/JIU SOLDIERS  
IN YAMBIO, SOUTHERN SUDAN

¶1. According to several sources including UNMIS Police reports, a group of six Joint Integrated Unit (JIU) soldiers shot and killed three police officers in Yambio, the capital of Western Equatoria State in Southern Sudan. Initial reports indicate that three SSPS (Southern Sudan police) senior officers were gunned down the evening of November 4, 2007 in an inter-tribal squabble. The victims have been identified as Maj. Joseph Eriminio, Lt. Col. Abbud, and acting state commissioner Brig. Gen. Michael Setib. UNMIS police officers witnessed the incident and filed "flash" reports after fleeing the shoot-out. The slain policemen were reportedly from the Azande tribe, while the JIU soldiers (provided to the JIU by the SPLA) are reportedly Dinka.

¶2. The incident allegedly began after SSPS officers arrested one or several JIU soldiers as part of an investigation into the apparent murder of another JIU soldier whose body was found November 3. On the evening of November 4, five JIU soldiers entered the Yambio police headquarters and, after quarreling with the SSPS officers, forcibly released their comrade from jail. Some ten minutes later, the same six JIU junior officers (all Dinkas) entered the police headquarters again and shot the three police. The UNMIS report states that the reason for the shooting appears to have been dissatisfaction on the part of the JIU soldiers over not having been informed that the murdered man was a fellow JIU soldier, and over how the murder investigation was being carried out.

¶3. Comment: According to their report, UNMIS police regard the incident as serious but isolated. However, the incident illustrates internal Southern fissures (in this case, possibly tribal) that can easily escalate into violence in volatile Southern Sudan. The lack of command and control in the SPLA demonstrated in this case underlines the importance of troop withdrawals and verifiable security arrangements along the North-South border.  
FERNANDEZ